

## Minted in God's Image

Taxes can be an interesting topic for conversation or debate, especially during a political season.

How much of your income do you pay in taxes? How much of your income do you keep? A friend of mine who is an accountant, explained it to me this way: *Basically, if you divide your annual income into 12 parts, like the 12 months of the year, you work January through April to pay your taxes. The rest you keep. For our Canadian neighbors up north, you work January through June to pay your taxes. The rest you keep. For our friends in Germany, January-July pays your taxes. The rest is yours.*

I suppose some people would like to see this Sunday's gospel as offering more clarity about paying taxes. After all, as citizens we have to find a way to pay for the services we receive like public education or getting our streets plowed.

But Jesus' words are less about taxes and more about the way we conduct our lives (Matthew 22:15-21)

When Jesus asks for a coin and inquires whose image is on the coin, he knows quite well that the image is the emperor. Paying the tax is the price exacted for the Caesar's armies keeping the peace throughout the empire.

As a Jew, Jesus also knew what the Torah, the Jewish scriptures stated about humans:

We are created in God's image. We bear the imprint of the Creator. We are "minted" in God's image.

That coin may be owed to the government. But our lives are "owed" to God. And if our lives are owed to God, our actions matter.

-How a boss treats his or her employees... matters.

-How we treat the most vulnerable, the sick, the voiceless... matters.

-Whether toxic chemicals are removed from a nearby river...matters.

-How much food I waste to the detriment of others...matters.

-The content and tone of what I post online and share with others...matters.

People don't tend to think of these things as "religious issues." Some might prefer to relegate religion to the proper amount of bows to be made at liturgy or what you can or can't eat on a fast day. That would be nice and easy and oh so comfortable. The Pharisees preferred to keep it that way!

Jesus offers an alternative religious path: Our conduct 24/7 reveals how we re-pay God for the gift of life. Yes, all of the above *really* matters.

There is an old saying: *Compassion and justice are the rent we pay for the privilege of being alive.* So, how do we make our lives a blessing to others, and to the generation to come? Jesus' path invites us to daily honesty and creativity.

Pray that we would allow the standard of the gospel to become the "currency" of our lives.

A facet of God's amazing image will be revealed through you.

Amen.

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